

VIRGINIA COMMISSION
FOR THE ARTS

STRATEGIC PLAN

2006-2008

January, 2006

MISSION

To support and stimulate excellence in all of the arts, in their full cultural and ethnic diversity, in order to enhance the quality of life, to stimulate economic development, to support educational advancement, and to make the arts accessible to all Virginians.

VALUES

The people of Virginia deserve great art. The Virginia Commission for the Arts supports artistic excellence where it exists, encourages growth in artistic quality, and works to make this artistic excellence available to all Virginians.

High quality art should be accessible to all Virginians, regardless of race, age, gender, income, disability, geographic isolation, or social barrier.

The Commission celebrates the diverse cultures that have led to the vitality of contemporary life in the Commonwealth.

An investment in the artists of today is an investment in the cultural heritage of the Commonwealth.

The Commission values creativity and innovation in the arts.

The Commission's role in funding the arts should be that of a catalyst, helping to strengthen private and local support of the arts.

The arts are a vital component of a healthy economy, improving the quality of life in urban and rural communities, adding jobs, and drawing tourists from around the world.

Study of the arts is essential to intellectual and creative development and should be a part of the education of every young person.

The Commission should be a responsible steward of the public trust, committed to using public resources fairly and efficiently, with the highest ethical and legal standards.

AGENCY CUSTOMERS

The Virginia Commission for the Arts considers its most important customers to be the people of the Commonwealth. The agency does not provide direct services to these customers but works with private arts organizations, individual artists, and schools to provide services to the arts audience and school children.

Not-For-Profit Arts Organizations

Private, non-profit organizations that produce or present the arts form the infrastructure that keeps the arts on stage and in view. These organizations include symphony orchestras, chamber music ensembles, community concert series, art museums, dance and theatre companies, literary magazines, local arts councils, and multi-purpose performance and exhibition spaces.

In addition to presenting performances on their main stages or formal exhibitions in climate controlled galleries, these organizations are extensively engaged in education and outreach efforts. These special activities include performances in schools, lecture demonstrations, classes for children and older Virginians, and teacher training. Almost all of the arts organizations that have activities for children have tied these educational activities to the state Standards of Learning in, not only the arts, but also in language arts, science, and social studies. These educational programs are not intended to replace arts instruction by full time teachers but are a resource to help the schools in achieving their instructional goals.

The Commission has found that working through these private arts organizations is the most efficient and cost effective way to serve the arts audience and students of the state.

The economic climate from 2001 to 2005 has provided unprecedented challenges for these institutions. Although the economy in general is improving, nonprofit organizations of all types, including the arts, are lagging behind in the recovery. The nonprofit arts organizations of the state have been traditionally undercapitalized and understaffed for the level of programming presented. There is little budget flexibility to deal with reductions in earned or contributed income.

Virginia arts organizations have, by and large, spent down their cash reserves, laid off staff, frozen salaries, and cut programs for the public. Many have borrowed to keep their doors open, and every institution is devoting more staff resources to fundraising. As staff sizes have been reduced, individuals are working longer hours and handling more responsibilities. Staff and volunteer burn-out and turnover are high.

These organizations need a stable funding base to enable them to stay in business and to

rebuild cash reserves and endowment funds as a cushion against future economic downturns. The professional and volunteer leadership of these organizations needs technical assistance in learning to adapt to the current economic climate. Their staff members, many of whom are now doing multiple jobs, need convenient and cost effective opportunities for training in a variety of arts management skills.

Elementary and Secondary Teachers and K-12 Schools

The Commission provides programs that enhance and enrich arts instruction offered in the public schools.

The Commission provides support for short and long term professional artist residencies and touring performances in elementary and secondary schools.

The Commission offers small grants to elementary and secondary school teachers for innovative projects that use the arts in other areas of the curriculum. In addition to providing valuable financial assistance, these grants bring recognition from a state agency for the often neglected heroes of the classroom.

The increased emphasis on the state Standards of Learning and the increased time spent on statewide testing has led to less flexibility in public school calendars. In the period covered by this plan, the Commission will evaluate its role in arts education and determine if the current arts education programs should be redesigned.

Artists

Individual artists are the soul of the arts field, and helping the artists of today is an investment in the cultural heritage of the Commonwealth. It is a goal of the Commission to develop a climate in which artists of exceptional talent may work full time at their art with the possibility of critical and financial rewards. The state spends significant funding each year on the training of artists through the state colleges and universities. Most of these young artists find it necessary to leave Virginia to build their artistic careers.

The Commission provides public recognition and financial assistance through fellowships to a small number of artists each year. The Commission awards grants to nonprofit arts organizations to hire Virginia artists and to present new work by Virginia artists of all disciplines. The Commission helps to subsidize residencies by Virginia artists at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the artist retreat in Amherst County. With funding from the Commission K-12 schools hire artists for long and short term residencies.

CRITICAL

ISSUES

- increased accessibility to the arts for the public
- strengthening the cultural infrastructure of the state
- strengthening arts education

Accessibility to the Arts

Making the arts available to a wider public is the first priority of this agency. The Commission will continue its work with the network of nonprofit arts organizations across the state to expand the number of arts events for the public.

The Performing Arts Touring and Writers in Virginia programs directly address the issue of making the arts available to a wider public.

The Commission also reviews all grant applications from arts organizations to be sure that these organizations are reaching out to all economic and racial segments of the community. All grantees of the Commission are required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make their facilities and programs accessible to people with disabilities.

Strengthening the Cultural Infrastructure of the State

For many years the Commission has invested a substantial portion of its financial resources into building a network of nonprofit arts organizations around the state. Many of these organizations are facing serious fiscal challenges. A number of highly valued arts institutions in Virginia have closed their doors. In the coming two years the Commission will work with the arts organizations of the state to restore the cuts in programs for the public, help to strengthen their organizational structures, and provide professional development opportunities for their staff and boards.

In addition to its ongoing Technical Assistance program, the Commission will begin a new partnership with the Virginians for the Arts Foundation to provide convenient and cost effective training workshops for the boards and staff of arts organizations.

In order to increase financial support for the arts, the Commission provides incentives for private and local government funding of the arts through its grant programs. The Commission views its role as that of a catalyst, helping to augment and strengthen private and local support of the arts. This philosophy recognizes that government resources are limited while the demand for services is high and that the arts are healthier when not financially dependent on any single source of support. Organizations receiving funding from the Commission are expected to earn as much income from ticket sales and other admission fees as possible, while seeking contributions

from individuals, corporations, foundations, and local governments, as well as income from special fundraising activities. The Commission reviews applications from arts organizations for operating support to be sure that these organizations have a diversified funding base.

Most of the Commission grant programs require a cash match of at least dollar for dollar. Operating support grants require a cash match of ten to one.

The Local Government Challenge Grant program provides incentives for localities to create funding programs for the arts using local tax revenues.

Arts Education

With financial and scheduling pressures few schools in Virginia offer full arts education with sequential courses in each of the major arts disciplines, providing both practice in and study of the history of the art forms. It is the position of the Commission for the Arts that study of the arts should be a part of the education of every young person, whether that student grows up to be a performer, a scientist, or a basketball player.

Not only is it important to learn about the arts, but arts education also provides effective learning opportunities that yield increased overall academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill-building. Arts education builds skills in problem-solving, in teamwork, and in self-discipline.

The major responsibility for arts education rests, of course, with the state and local education agencies. The Commission has a variety of programs that enrich the work of teachers in the public schools - artist residencies, the educational programs of nonprofit arts organizations around the state, small grants to teachers for innovative projects that use the arts in other areas of the curriculum, and touring performers that go into schools.

The educational reform efforts of recent years offer an opportunity for arts education. Advocates for arts education have long pushed for higher academic standards in the major fields of arts instruction - the visual arts, music, theatre, and dance. In far too many schools the arts programs are considered extracurricular activities with the result that students are not held to sufficiently high learning standards.

At the same time the laudable goal of improving instruction in the "core" subjects has the potential of limiting opportunities for students to study other subjects, including the arts, as part of the school day. Unless the arts are included as a part of the curriculum, students whose families lack the financial resources for private instruction in the arts may miss out on a vital part of a well rounded education.

The Commission funds short and long term artist residencies in preK-12 schools. These artists enrich the work of the classroom teachers and provide role models for students as working professionals in the arts.

The education and outreach programs of many arts organizations around the state are designed to enhance learning, not only in the arts, but also in other areas of the curriculum. The majority of the nonprofit arts organizations of the state have extensive and carefully designed educational programs for young people. In recent years many of these educational programs have been redesigned to enhance learning based on the State Standards of Learning. The Commission funds over 180 arts organizations each year that work with local schools to provide programs that enhance learning.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES 2006-2008

Following are the agency goals and objectives for the upcoming two biennia. The strategies to achieve these objectives will be carried out in 2006-2008.

Goal 1: High quality arts accessible to all Virginians, regardless of location in state, race, income, or disability

Objective 1: Provide incentives to non-profit arts organizations to expand the number of arts events for the public throughout Virginia.

Strategy 1: Evaluate all applications from nonprofit arts organizations for operating support on the basis of service to the community.

Strategy 2: Provide financial and technical assistance each year to at least 10 new and emerging arts organizations working with underserved populations.

Objective 2: Provide financial incentives to nonprofit organizations for new initiatives in the arts

Strategy 1: Award at least 50 Project Grants in each year for activities that increase opportunities for Virginians to attend high quality arts activities

Objective 2: Through the Touring Program support at least 250 performances in every Virginia city and in at least 90 counties each year of the biennium.

Objective 3: Through the Writers in Virginia program support 30 readings a year by Virginia poets and writers of fiction.

Objective 4: Continue membership in the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation which supports performances by out of state artists in Virginia

Goal 2: A vibrant cultural infrastructure for the Commonwealth with a strong financial base

Objective 1: Assist organizations of artistic merit by providing funds to maintain stability and encourage advancement

Strategy 1: Continue to support at least 175 arts organizations each year through the General Operating Support Grants

Strategy 2: Support the work of local arts agencies in serving the artists and arts organizations of their communities by providing operating support and technical assistance

Objective 2: Provide incentives to at least 120 localities in each year of the biennium to fund the arts with local tax revenues

Strategy 1: Continue the Local Government Challenge Grant program.

Objective 3: Provide training to non-profit arts organizations in a wide variety of arts management skills

Strategy 1: Through the Technical Assistance program help arts organizations identify and hire fundraising and planning consultants

Strategy 2: Through the Technical Assistance program help arts organizations send board and staff members to conferences, workshops, and seminars on marketing, planning, and financial management

Strategy 3: Begin a partnership with the Virginians for the Arts Foundation to provide workshops on arts management issues in convenient locations around the state

Objective 4: Provide assistance to non-profit arts organizations in upgrading their technology in order to strengthen their administrative and artistic structures

Strategy 1: Begin a new grant category of Technology Enhancement Grants and require applicants to develop organizational technology plans

Goal 3: Opportunities for Virginia artists of exceptional talent to develop their careers in the Commonwealth

Objective 1: Support the work of outstanding Virginia artists

Strategy 1: Through artist fellowships assist at least 10 individual artists each year in the creation of new work

Strategy 2: Support the work of nonprofit organizations that provide studio space,

exhibition opportunities, performance opportunities, and information/advisory services for artists

Strategy 3: Through the Project Grant category provide funding to nonprofit organizations to commission or purchase the work of Virginia artists

Goal 4: Instruction and participation in the arts for all Virginia students, K-12

Objective 1: Ensure that at least 900,000 students in grades K-12 have contact with working, professional artists as part of their educational experience in each year of the biennium.

Strategy 1: Provide funding to at least 175 non-profit arts organizations that offer in-school and after-school programs for young people that enhance and enrich the school curricula

Strategy 2: Fund at least 30 artist residencies in grades K-12 each year.

Strategy 3: Select performers each year for the Tour Directory with experience and interest in working with schools and children.

Objective 2: Recognize and support at least 250 elementary and secondary school teachers in developing innovative arts projects in the classroom each year of the biennium

Strategy 1: Award Teacher Incentive Grants for projects that use the arts to teach other subjects of the curriculum.